Claim 31, lines 8-9, "with a shim element extending from a distal end the first retractor blade so as to affix said first retractor blade relative to said spinal target site;" was replaced by - - *with a shim element removeably engaged to said first retractor blade after introducing said first retractor blade to said spinal target site and extending from a distal end of the first retractor blade so as to affix said first retractor blade relative to said spinal target site*; - -

Change(s) applied to document, /N.D./ 10/24/2011

Claim 46, lines ~~11-13~~ 12-15, "after said first retractor blade is positioned in said first position along said spine, affixing said first retractor blade relative to said spine through the use of a first extension element extending from said first retractor blade into said spine;" was replaced by - - *after said first retractor blade is positioned in said first position along said spine, removably engaging an extension element to said first retractor blade such that the extension element extends from said first retractor blade into said spine to affix said first retractor blade relative to said spine;* - -

Claim 46, lines ~~16-20~~ 18-22, "on said spine; and after said second retractor blade is moved away from said first retractor blade and is positioned in a second position along said spine, affixing said second retractor blade relative to said spine through the use of a second extension element extending from said second retractor blade into said spine. " was replaced by - - **on said spine.** - -

- This Notice of Allowance is responsive to Applicant's Amendment filed on 09/30/2010. The amendments, remarks, pages 12-13, filed therein and the above Examiner's Amendment have overcome the rejection of independent claims 16, 31, 46. Therefore, the rejections of the claims have been withdrawn.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE